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Changes in the system of higher professional education in multiethnic Kazakhstan due to globalization

Lyaila Turumbetova*

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, 71 Al-Farabi av., Almaty, 050038, Kazakhstan

Abstract

Globalization which is undergoing in the whole world has effects on education, culture, languages people use. It is clear that it is not possible to stop globalization process. This process is marked by the spread of commodities and ideologies, the transmission of ideas, meanings and values across national borders which become standardized around the world. Technology, goods and services, promoted by the present era of globalization, have deep educational and cultural implications. The present day education is aimed at the growth of body, mind, intellect and soul. Today no one country can claim economy and political leadership in the new millennium without reform of its system of professional education. Higher professional education accounts for civilization development and identifies the level of social, economy and technology development. It defines requirements for the rest education levels, establishes their standards and provides society with high quality human resources.

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1. Introduction

In 1991, as the Soviet Union was split up, Kazakhstan became an independent country. Since that time Kazakhstan is the one of few countries among former USSR republics which hadn't: great social shocks, civil wars, "coloured revolutions" and social instability. Kazakhstan is the exception from usual post-soviet space: it hadn't great interethnic conflicts. President N.A. Nazarbayev worked out and created the system providing the rights of different ethnic groups and making the interethnic dialogue possible; the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan appeared as the important element of such dialogue, so as to know the traditions and culture of peoples of Kazakhstan; to be tolerant to the traditions and culture of other nations.

Since independence in 1991 Kazakhstan has employed various approaches and strategies in modernizing the national education system, improving the quality of education and attempting to raise standards to international levels. Among the innovations introduced during the last two decades was an attempt to establish western-style research. "The reform of higher education targeted the restructuring of the system in order to bring it closer to the one that exists in many countries of the world. In the past, most institutions of higher learning had a status of an institute with a five-year program. In the 1990s, they were converted into universities and academies with the four-year bachelor and one or two-year graduate master's programs" (Nazarbayev N., 2011). Kazakhstan transformed its

* Corresponding Author Lyaila Turumbetova. Tel.: +7-701-336-7871

E-mail address: t.lyaila@mail.ru

Academy of Sciences into a public organization and attempted to channel all research funding to specialized agencies such as the National Innovation Fund and to various universities across the country. Education reforms and the related changes have had a huge impact on Kazakhstan's education sector. These changes helped to create a dynamic labor market, in which a new generation of western-trained young professionals plays a major role. Several sectors of the national economy have been built practically from scratch, notably banking, finance, legal and some other service sectors – with young graduates, especially from leading western universities, filling most of the positions, making these sectors the most competitive in the CIS zone. The sovereignty challenged Kazakhstan to join the world community, to integrate national education system with the international one.

2. Formation of modern higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan the reform of higher education has been implemented since 1995. To carry out a comparative study of all components of national and foreign education system levels, to make the revision of conceptual and methodology basics of higher professional education has become of great significance, the vital necessity. The new Law on Education was adopted in 1999. “For the first time education was declared a top priority area of the state policy in Kazakhstan. In this line the state education policy was directed to revision of the legislation, management and finance system of the education sector (Zhakenov G, 2011)”. The primary goal of higher professional education system development is education quality enhancement through systematic and targeted reform of higher education sector. The most important directions of higher professional education system development are integration of Kazakhstan into the world education system; coordination of approaches to state education standards; expansion of interstate information exchange in education area. If we consider the modern period of development of higher education, it is planned to achieve the following main objectives:

- Creation of an effective system of educational management, which will ensure the formation of a competent professional person, a competitive specialist who can independently and creatively solve professional problems and realize personal and social significance of professional activity and be responsible for its results;
- Ensuring the implementation of the principle of “life-long learning”;
- Creation of conditions for producing high-quality, competitive, result-oriented education.

International cooperation is one of most critical directions of higher education development aimed at integration of national higher education with the international education system. International cooperation in education area is regulated by the Legislation of Kazakhstan and implemented on the basis of international agreements, contracts and conventions. Agreements on cooperation in education area have been signed with more than 20 countries. The governments of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Kazakhstan signed the Agreement on Mutual Recognition and Equivalency of Qualifications, Academic Degrees and Ranks. Such joint education institutions as the Khodja Ahmed Yassawi International Kazakhstan-Turkish University, Suleyman Demirel University, Kazakh-American University, the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Strategic Research and the Kazakhstan-British Technical University have been established and operate in the republic.

Kazakhstan is gaining invaluable practical experience by co-operating with top international universities. Today about 5,5 thousand citizens of Kazakhstan study in over 35 countries of the world. Borders of cooperation geography in the area of education and science expand every year. Kazakhstan students study abroad under the following programs: international education exchanges; scholarships granted by governments of foreign countries and international organizations; international scholarship called Bolashak. Since 1993, ‘Bolashak’ scholarships have been awarded to over 6,000 students to attend top universities abroad. The program provides full funding for education in foreign countries, including tuition fees and living and travel expenses. The condition for funding has been simple and clear: graduates have to return to their home country and work for the government or various government agencies for five years. Hundreds of Bolashak graduates returned to Kazakhstan bringing important know-how and expertise in crucial fields – from banking and energy to public management and engineering.

The Ministry of Education and Science takes part in projects implemented by such international organizations as UNESCO, ACTR/ACCELS, UNDP, the Peace Corps, the USIS, the Soros Fund, the IREX, the British Council/Kazakhstan, the German Service for International Academic Exchange, the National Center for School and University Programs of France (CNOUS), the Bureau for Linguistic and Pedagogic Cooperation of French Embassy

in Kazakhstan. Cooperation with the TACIS and TEMPUS in implementation of the Program directed at establishment of academic relations between universities of Kazakhstan and the European Union is rather successful. “The Ministry of Education and Science has done a considerable work aimed at formation of common the CIS education system and a universal criteria design. At the 5th Session of the Council for Mutual Recognition of Academic Awards, Degrees and Ranks of the Integration Committee that was held on 17-19 June 2002 in Dushanbe parties signed an agreement on obligatory accreditation of education institutions acknowledged by all member-countries of the Euro-Asian Economy Organization”. The current educational reform in higher education, credit-based learning is aimed at lifelong self-development, self-education and creative innovative activities. The State Programme on Education Development in Kazakhstan 2011-2020 highlights the basic directions of activity, which lay the bases of e-learning in the country. The aim of e-learning is provision of equal access for all participants of education process to better educational resources and technologies. The task of the programme is to create conditions to introduce automatization of teaching process. 50% of higher educational institutions are expected to use e-learning systems by 2015, and 90 % - by 2020. Bakytzhan Jumagulov Minister of Education and Science of Republic of Kazakhstan said: “It is not an easy task, it requires a brand new methodology, technical and information bases. We must handle it” (Jumagulov B., 2011)

3. The fulfillment of the parameters of the Bologna Process in the education system of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan was among the first countries of former USSR republics to join the Bologna process. March 11, 2010 the Committee of Ministers of Education of the Bologna Process (46 countries) decided on Kazakhstan's joining the Bologna process. In 2011 Kazakhstan began implementing a strategic ten-year program to overhaul the whole education system both in terms of structure and teaching. Kazakhstan is adopting many tenets of Western education, from a 12-year school system instead of the 11-year Soviet model to the European Union approach to higher education.

The entrance of Kazakhstan to the Bologna process gives real advantages for Kazakhstani higher educational institutions and students. They are the following: bringing of educational programs and syllabi into accordance with the European standards; recognition of the country's qualifications and academic degrees; ensuring academic mobility of teachers and students; recognition of the educational credits of Kazakhstani students at foreign universities; implementing two-diploma education program; recognition of Kazakhstani diplomas in European Union; the right of graduates being employed in any country-participant of the Bologna process. Kazakhstan has taken a considerable step forward adopting a three-stage model of higher education which would allow students to study more easily internationally, and to add the possibility of a curriculum with electives and student-chosen courses. Bachelor's degree is typically a four-year degree. Master's degree is a two year degree, corresponding to the Western masters. Doctoral degree is typically a three - five year program. So, this is a three stage model: Bachelor – Master – Ph.D. By joining the Bologna process in 2011, Kazakhstan demonstrated its interest in furthering cooperation with international partners. The Nazarbayev University, founded in 2010 is introducing and adapting the best available international experience to the curriculum. The Nazarbayev University positions itself as a national educational center and a hub where educators from around the country and from around the region can learn about pedagogical approaches, incorporation of new media and IT into the teaching process, developing critical thinking among the students and gaining educational know-how to transfer to their home institutions.

Kazakhstan's entry into the international education community as a fully fledged partner has brought great changes in higher education system. The introduction of corporate management techniques and multilingual education together with the promotion of academic mobility has set new benchmarks for Kazakhstani higher education institutions. About 600,000 students study in 143 universities in Kazakhstan. Technical and professional education is changing radically. Employers are involved in the development of 147 new professional standards. Shared responsibility between potential employers and education institutions for providing personnel with quality training is being encouraged and developed.

The new PhD program produces qualitatively new young academics, the generation of academic staff whose skills will allow them to integrate into the global academic community. As a result of the reforms, the structure of Kazakhstan's education system is becoming closer to global standards.

The State Program provides for establishment of the Bologna Process Center and the Center of Academic Mobility with quality services at the level of world standards in view of integration into the European Higher Education Area. Besides, the developed in April 2011 new rules of organization of education process on credit technology provide for scale of evaluation of credit technology in Kazakhstan and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and mutual excepting of education programs, organization of academic mobility within Kazakhstan's model of excepting credits on the ECTS basis, using of the European system of transfer and accumulation of credits in education process and module building of education programs. Thus, the legal framework for development of academic mobility has been created. It is one of the effective ways to increase the quality of training personnel. The first steps in development of academic mobility have already been made. In 2011 the state for the first time supported the study in foreign higher education institution for one academic period in the best universities of Europe, South East Asia and the CIS. Besides, the mechanism of internal academic mobility was developed. The principle of this mechanism is 'regional higher education institution – national university' and it means that the students from the regional higher education institutions are able to study in the leading higher education institutions of the country.

The State Program of Education Development for 2011-2020 in the Republic of Kazakhstan determined a new goal of education - orientation on achieving concrete results combining educational and professional standards that regulated the training requirements demanded in the labor market of competent personnel. The program on development of education for 2020 provides for the measures that will promote autonomy of the national research universities since 2015, national higher education institutes – since 2016 and since 2018 all the rest higher education institutions of the country. The government announced the SPDE-2020, committing itself to equip Kazakhstan's education system to meet internationally competitive standards: organization of study process with the application of distant education technologies, opening of multimedia classrooms, creation of multilevel system of training and re-training of personnel in the field of information technologies. Introduction of electronic learning (e-learning) takes a special place. New information technologies, multimedia and Internet technologies are used to improve the quality of education on account of improving the access to resources and services, as well as remote knowledge and mutual experience exchange. The main advantages of e-learning are connected with the expansion of accessibility and improvement of education quality. Educational services are provided directly at the student's residence which is especially important for disabled people, socially vulnerable people and people living in remote villages.

Now all universities received access to the Internet and modern communication technologies, and funds to equip computer classes and to expand university libraries; to create electronic libraries. Technology brings changes in the teaching methodologies. The use of the computer forces pedagogy to think in new ways to exploit the computers benefits and work around its limitations. The computer provides opportunity for students to be less dependent on a teacher and have more freedom to experiment on their own, computers will give progressive results, if used in managing of teaching based on mistakes diagnosing. Computers can be successfully applied in organization of individual work of students after classes and testing works. Being a new technical means of teaching, the computer has an assisting role, as it solves methodical tasks that the traditional means of teaching do. Technology is great tool for making teaching process better, but equipment and automation can never replace person to person communication. But not only had the system of teaching to be changed. At the same time, students should change their attitude towards academic freedom. By integrating new technologies, students should feel responsible for the outcome of their learning process. One of the principal of innovative advantages of the Bologna process is the mobility of teachers and students. In the Message of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev "Building the Future Together" (2011) education and training in the XXI century are identified as the main priorities of the state policy, in particular, he points out: "Qualitative education should be the basis for industrialization and innovative development of Kazakhstan. We are obliged to provide a new level of development of university education and science" (Nazarbayev N.,2011).

4. Conclusion

After entering the Bologna process in March 2010, Kazakhstan has become the first Central Asian State to enter the European educational system. It is an important step in the international positioning of the national higher education. Kazakhstan's higher professional education system has undergone serious changes during the last

decade, as the government increased its education budget seven-fold, achieving the highest education spending in the Central Asian region in absolute terms. The aim of Kazakhstan's participation in the Bologna process is expanding access to European education, further enhancing its quality, as well as increasing the mobility of students and faculty through the adoption of comparable levels of higher education, the use of a credit system. This process is accompanied by significant changes in educational theory and practice of the educational process. At present it is possible to state with confidence that Kazakhstan has entered a period of successful experience in implementing the Bologna process and its adaptation to modern realities. Education as a process of enlightenment and empowerment by which the individuals are able to secure a better quality of life should not become a means of westernizing of Kazakhstan society. On the contrary, it should treat each unique culture and society with due respect, realizing that global education is not only knowing about the West, but also studying different cultures of the world, using different approaches, ways of teaching. Respect to other people, to their culture, language and religious tolerance is intrinsic in Kazakh mentality, whose pivot is striving for harmony with the world around. That's what underlies Kazakh's nationhood. Multinationality and multilinguality are the main assets of our country. Development of languages is prioritized in the recent Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to the People of Kazakhstan where he outlined plans to promote the study of the Kazakh, Russian, English and other languages of more than 130 ethnic groups in the nation.

In the 21st century the education system of Kazakhstan faces the dual challenge of equipping students with new knowledge, skills and values to be competitive in a global market while at the same time producing graduates who are responsible for the future of Kazakhstan and Kazakh people with their long-standing cultural heritage which remained strong in the face of numerous external influences over centuries. By integrating new technologies, students should feel responsible for the outcome of their learning process. Adherence to rules and regulations of the Bologna Declaration suggests considerable independence of the student in mastering the knowledge that requires special support information. In the light of the new educational policy to provide additional knowledge related to the diversity of cultures, languages, and national education system in the European area of higher education is an inner necessity of the educational process. Innovative education is the process and the result of such training which, in addition to maintaining the existing traditions, stimulate the desire of future specialists to make changes to the social sphere, improving the quality of life, to explore the world, to join it in an active dialogue. The youth of today leads the world of tomorrow.

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